

714 by the maturer warriors. A tribesman had the right to elaborate his dress in accordance with his prowess, and the great chiefs wore attached to their backs immense frames covered with feathers. Tribes, and even clans, wore special insignia, so that friend could be distinguished from foe and chief from common warrior. The term uniform could hardly be used, since the rich variety and indulgence in individual fancy produced a kaleidoscopic effect in the motley array of bright colors and strange forms.*

712 To supply these forces was a very considerable task. Each quarter of the town had its *tlacoiccalco*, or house of darts, an arsenal where the military supplies were stored. This was situated near the chief temple, the lofty sides of which made it a natural strong point. At a call to arms the clan leaders could rapidly assemble their men and equip them at these rallying points, which were also centers of the religious and social life of the community.*

- 724 An offensive campaign was a more serious undertaking. Having no beasts of burden, the warriors had to carry their own food with them. Due to the governmental system, wherein each town was independent, the armies did not dare live off the country for fear of inciting revolt and also because most communities lacked the food to sustain a large body of men. Thus, prior to a war, negotiations had to be made whereby supplies could be concentrated and allies brought together at a point as near as possible to the zone of attack. Usually a single battle decided the issue, since the attacking force could not maintain itself in the field for more than a very few days. The calculations necessary to fight a war two or three hundred miles away in Oaxaca, say, were highly complex, and much of the Aztec force on such a cam-

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paign must have been composed of local tribesmen, stiffened 724 ● with a *garde d'élite* of Tenochcas and Texcocans.

Owing to this difficulty in respect to transport, siege 712 operations were virtually impossible, so that formal fortifications were rare. Some towns were built in very strategic locations, high on a mountainside or in the bend of a river, having access restricted to a narrow neck of land. Tenochtitlan, owing to its situation on the lake, was a natural fort. The causeways were penetrated by canals at intervals, so that removal of the portable bridges created natural barriers. The flat roof tops offered good points from which to harry the enemy in the street below, and the many temples were strong points difficult to reduce. (See Plate 37, top.)

Miles of defensive walls surrounded a site in Tlaxcala, where a ditch backed by a wall enclosed an area of several square miles. At Huexotla,* a fief of Texcoco, a wall at least fifteen feet high still exists and must have had a strong defensive value, although its ostensible purpose was to enclose the area about the main temple. Xochicalcot† is situated on a high hill which was intensively terraced, and it was further strengthened by a wide ditch cut through the point of easiest access. Sometimes a site was chosen between two ravines which made impassable obstacles to an attacking force. However, while defensive purposes were often taken into account in building towns, strictly defensive works, in the nature of fortifications, were seldom undertaken.¹⁰

Open fighting, the difficulty of keeping up extended cam- 726 paigns and the informal character of the military force were factors which stultified the development of tactics or strategy. In battle the howling mob which represented the collective

*Way-sha-tla. †Xochicalcot-on.

armament.¹⁴⁰ Thus the largest bodies were assembled, furnished ⁷²⁶ weapons, and organized under their respective leaders of all grades on very short notice, awaiting the signal from the chief commander to sally forth, either by canoes across the lake,¹⁴¹ or along the causeways, to the mainland. Each warrior carried ⁷²⁶ mostly his own frugal provisions¹⁴² which the women of each ⁷²⁴ household had prepared; "corn-bread, meal-cakes, ground beans, "corn-meal seasoned with pepper;"¹⁴³ but special carriers also accompanied the force, loaded with a surplus of food, with robes for tents, reeds for huts and bowers, and with cooking utensils like kettles, pans, baskets; also with mata.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes these

¹⁴⁰ It also happened that an interval of twenty days (a Mexican month) elapsed between the proclamation of war and the final departure. At least, in most cases, a few days were spent in preparations, since the Mexicans had to give time to their outside allies or subjects to prepare, also. Tzacomoc (Cap. XXXVI): "The Mexicans in the interval prepared the arms in all the quarters,— shields, swords, and made and finished many rods ('tlatzontzotli'), also slings, and pebbles to be thrown with cords." (Id., Cap. LVII) "Within twenty days they prepared and fitted out all kinds of arms, first in the five quarters of Mexico-Tenochtitlan: Moyotlan, Teopan, Ytze-cuiclan, Cuicopcan, and Tlatilneco, now called Santiago." In many cases, however, an instantaneous mobilization of the whole force became necessary. Mexico, in times of peace, had to be always ready for war. See, also, Tzacomoc (Cap. XXXII, pp. 49 and 50).

¹⁴¹ Canoes, "acalli" (water-houses, from "all," water, and "calli," house), were used ^[508] for the traffic with the main land, but also largely for the carrying of warriors. It is well known what important part they played against the Spaniards during the siege. For the movements of the Mexicans against a hostile tribe, both on land and water, see Durán (Cap. XIV, p. 181), wherein he describes the attack upon Cuicahuac, both by canoes and on dry land.

¹⁴² Durán (Cap. XLVI, p. 388): "porque de mas de lo que los reyes proveyan de sus grandes trajes y graneros, cada soldado llevava á quecas su particular comida, todo lo que podia llevar, atada á la carga de espada y la rodeaba, etc., etc."

¹⁴³ The women prepared the food, but it also occurred that the stewards dispensed it. Tzacomoc (Cap. XXXII, p. 48): "With this the stewards and calpixques of the tribes gave to their quarters maize for to make biscuit, tlacuatotopochtli, pinole, ground pepper, chile, beans, and all what pertained to it, providing themselves with everything necessary for certain day stated." The "tlacuatotopochtli" (from "tlaxcalli," corn-bread, and "totopochtli," burnt-bread) would be biscuit of maize-meal, and it is therefore called "vizecho." The pinole, or pinole, corn-meal mixed with pepper, was an important viatical. The food of the Mexicans, in general, outside of the meals (exclusively civil and some game) and aquatic animals, consisted of maize in various forms, and of pepper, "chile," as seasoning. Cacao furnished their main beverage, and stores of it were taken along. See, also, Durán (Cap. XLVI, p. 388: "maiz tostado y otro molido y hecho harina, frijol molido, pan blanco, tamales molidos y curados al sol, grandes fardos de chile, cacao molido hecho en pellos"). They also used maize to compose a beverage called "yotatl," which possessed particularly vivifying qualities (see note of Sr. Ramirez in p. 286 of Durán), and which they dispensed even on the battlefield (Durán, Cap. XXXVII; Tzacomoc, Cap. LII).

¹⁴⁴ These carriers are called "tamemes," and are generally regarded as having been ^[564] slaves. But they probably were captives from the head of kinship, or the men of ^[554] newly conquered tribes (like Tlatilneco for a time after its capture), upon whom this ^[554] degrading work (known as tamem-tlamem) was imposed as a penalty. Slaves were not as-

726 carriers were burthened with a surplus of arms, and even with ornaments, designed to reward deeds of high valor on the battlefield itself. This "train" (if we may use the expression) was under the command of stewards, who accompanied the force for that purpose.¹⁴⁵ The Mexicans having no domestic animals besides small dogs and fowls, it necessarily followed that their supplies and stores taken along by carriers were limited, and that consequently their expeditions could never be of long duration, partaking more of the character of forays or "raids" than of regular campaigns. As long as they moved among friendly tribes they expected these to furnish victuals; further on they relied upon what the enemy's country might possibly afford.

726 But the Mexicans, since their position in the middle of the lagoon had been secured, and after they had once gained a foothold on its shores by overpowering successively some of the tribes scattered along the mainland, not any longer ventured out alone on their marauding expeditions. They required of those whom they conquered to join them in arms at their bidding.¹⁴⁶ What the exact relations were, which existed between the Mexicans and the other tribes of the valley, especially those of Tezcuco and Tlaco-

Slaves were not numerous among the Mexicans, if there were any at all beyond the prisoners of war. The latter they could not use for such a purpose. Some of the young people often accompanied the warriors, carrying their weapons and supplies, that they might see and learn (Tezosomoc, Cap. LXXI, p. 181). But the numbers of these carriers (100,000) are greatly exaggerated. Among the various objects mentioned by Tezosomoc as carried along by the Mexicans in their campaigns, there are "tents, low huts, reeds for the xacales." "Tent," in Mexican, signifies "Quachcalli," from "Quachtli," mantle, and "calli," house. Huts, "xacalli," of straw, or bowers, they certainly used, and the step is not very great, from the hut to the tent covered with what we call among northern Indians a "blanket." Durán mentions both tents and huts, "tiendas y xacales," frequently (Cap. XXI, pp. 183 and 186; cap. XXII, p. 190, etc.). The cooking utensils, like pans and kettles, had to go along, of course. Mats, "petlatl," for couches, and probably, also, for the covering of huts, were equally requisite and even indispensable. Lastly, mantles of "nequen" (Sisal hemp, "Jennequin"). This was the most ordinary material composing the dress of Mexicans. The "huepili" of the ordinary Mexican was made out of "nequen." These mantles were used for protection against the sun; they were light and therefore convenient to wear and to have carried (See Tezosomoc, Cap. XXXII, pp. 20 and 26).

¹⁴⁵ Tezosomoc (Cap. XXXII, p. 26): "Y los mayordomos personalmente fueron a esta jornada" (against Orizava).

¹⁴⁶ Those tribes which had been made subjects to Mexico were compelled, whenever called upon, to join the armed forces of the Mexicans. Tezosomoc seldom speaks of any foray without mentioning that the subjected tribes took part in it, on the summons of the Mexicans to that effect. See Herrera (Dec. III, lib. IV, cap. XV, p. 183); Tezosomoc (Cap. XXXI, p. 46; cap. XLVII, p. 77; cap. LI, p. 83). There is hardly any direct testimony, but the fact is abundantly proven that the Mexicans could call out, and did call out, to their assistance, any tribe which they had previously conquered. See Durán (Cap. XI, p. 813); and Zurita "Rapport, etc." p. 11.

726 therefore, that sallied out of Mexico was sure to find at the meet-
648 ing-place appointed, numerous reinforcements from various tribes,
fully armed and equipped, with an organization similar to their
own,¹³³ ready for the onward march, at the end of which, if suc-
cessful, a certain share of human victims and of plunder would
reward their efforts.¹³⁴

As soon as the entire force was duly collected at the appointed meeting-place, it began to move forward speedily and swiftly, and in a straight line, if possible, towards the enemy's country. The various tribes, as well as their respective subdivisions, kept distinct from each other, led by their own native chiefs. The Mexicans were mostly in the rear. The approach of this body of warriors was not always pleasant to tributary or friendly settlements situated along the marchroute. These were expected to come out with reinforcements, with food and presents, and if any one of them failed or neglected to comply with these requisitions, it became exposed to the most barbarous violence. Such pueblos were sacked, plundered, the people ill-treated. In their fury the Mexicans sometimes went so far as to empty and destroy the stores of maize, and to kill wantonly the few domestic animals (dogs and fowls) of the unfortunate inhabitants.¹³⁵

[724] The tribute which the valley pueblos paid to Mexico may yet, perhaps, prove to have been more a religious offering than anything else. They were certainly more on terms of equality, whereas the foreign tribes were held in subjection proper. The word "popolucan," stammerers, applied by the Mexicans to those of the coast, and which has induced Clavigero to adopt the erroneous idea of a "Popolucan" language, shows the disdain and hatred nourished by tribes of different stock towards each other.

¹³³ Each tribe had to prepare its own arms and supplies, it remained under its own chiefs and captains. Tezozomoc and Durán both agree on this point. Their organization was essentially the same as that of the Mexicans. Everywhere in the valley, and even in Matlatzinco, we find the characteristic division of the Mexicans,—the two head-war-chiefs, the four quarters, and the minor captains and braves.

¹³⁴ Ixtlixochitl ("Histoire des Chichimeques," Cap. XXXVIII, p. 273) says that Mexico and Tescuco had each two-fifths, Tlacopan one-fifth, of the spoils. Tezozomoc claims three-fourths for Mexico alone. The point is yet in doubt. (Zurita, "Rapport, etc.," p. 12.)

[724] ¹³⁵ Tezozomoc (Cap. XXIII, p. 50): "The Mexicans never lacked food nor supplies," when on the march, since they "were so much feared by all the tribes, that as soon as they arrived they were well received and treated. When their forces were on the war-path neither man nor woman remained outside of their dwellings, out of fear of the warriors, and if these perchance met any one, any laborer or trader, they robbed him even up to his very clothes. Such tribes as did not go out to meet them they plundered and robbed of everything, emptying their stores of maize, killing their fowls and even their dogs." (Id. Cap. LXXXIV, p. 147.) Durán (Cap. XXI, p. 133): "porque para el camino los pueblos y ciudades prometan de todo lo necesario, como tengo dicho, so pena de ser destruidos." It thus appears that for the march the Mexicans did not have to provide any food, since the settlements along the route had to maintain

The objective point of this march was, as we have already⁷²⁶ stated, the enemy's territory. There was no strict boundary-line^[131] dividing the tribes of Mexico from each other; a belt of uninhabited or deserted land merely surrounded and thus isolated every tribe.¹²⁶ This neutral strip was the ground on which the enemy expected the Mexicans (provided they knew of their coming, and felt strong enough to meet them in the open field).¹²⁷ It was, therefore, commonly called "ground of war or battle" ("Yao-tlailli"),¹²⁸ and as soon as the Mexican force approached this region, its movements grew less swift and proportionately more cautious. At dusk they halted on this dangerous area, selecting for their encampment, if possible, an elevated, open position, unfavorable for surprise. The huts (and perhaps tents) and bowers, for which some materials had been taken along, were hurriedly

them, Duran positively saying, on the same page, after a lengthy enumeration of the supplies and provisions prepared for the journey: "lo qual, luego fué en seguimiento de la gente; lo qual no se procedia sino para el lugar donde se avia de acentar el real, "porque para el camino los pueblos y ciudades proveian de todo lo necesario, etc., etc., etc." The same author continues (p. 184): "Haciase servir como dioses, y en todos los caminos no parecia gente por donde iban los soldados y la gente de guerra. todos se encerraban que no osasen andar por los caminos, porque los soldados les quitaban quanto llevaban en sus cargas, y si acaso le queria defender, los apaleaban y berias, y algunos mataban y iban robando las sementeras y matando quantas gallinas y perillos topaban; iban haciendo quanto mal podian, como lo hacen agora nuestros españoles, si no los van a' la mano, . . . y así en sabiendo que ania guerra, todos los vecinos de los pueblos, por donde anian de pasar los del exercito, se escondian y escondian el maiz, el chile, las gallinas y los perros, finalmente escondian quanto tenían." This shows a very simple mode of subsistence,—they lived upon the country through which they passed. But it also shows the barbarous condition of the Nahuatl tribes. Even on their march through a friendly country from whose annual tribute they partly subsisted, they behaved little better than a large horde of savages, or at least of cut-throats and highway robbers. The "civilized" troops of Europe were little better at that time, and even up to the close of the 17th century.

¹²⁶ Gomara ("De las guerras," Vedia, I, p. 442): "They call quiahtlailli the space and area which they left depopulated between the boundaries of each province for to fight there, and it is like unto sacred." See Tezozomoc (Cap. LXVIII, p. 113; cap. LXXXVI, p. 131; cap. XCV, p. 167, etc., etc.). The delegates sent by Tlaxcallan, Huexotzinco, and Cholula, to assist at the festivals in Mexico, were always met "half way in the woods" ("la mitad del monte") separating the tribes. Ixtlilxochitl ("Histoire des Chichimèques," Cap. XXXIII, p. 123) mentions a boundary line between the territories of Mexico and Tzacano, but the description of it is such that the statement remains more than doubtful.

¹²⁷ Torquemada (Lib. XIV, cap. III, p. 238): "Quando se admitia la batalla, y venian los unos, contra los otros, callan los de la Provincia, o Pueblo a' un lugar particular, que tenían entre sus terminos los quales llamaban Tautlailli, que quiere decir; Termino o Lugar de la Guerra. Aquí callan los Proprietarios de la Tierra a' recibir a los contrarios." Also, Gomara (Vedia, I, p. 443).

¹²⁸ From "yaoitl," enemy, or "yaoyotl," battle or war, and "tlailli," ground or soil.